

UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED  
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**Factors associated with positive body image among adolescent girls**

Theses of Ph.D. dissertation

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The focus of this dissertation is body appreciation, one of the components of positive body image. The importance of body appreciation is supported by previous studies. Research has found that body appreciation is closely related to self-esteem, optimism, and satisfaction with life. Furthermore, body appreciation positively correlates with enjoyment-based physical activity, whereas negatively correlates with alcohol consumption, smoking and dieting for thinnes. It can be seen that a high level of body appreciation has many positive consequences and effects. In a time of change, such as adolescence, developing a positive body image can be important to help young individuals maintain mental health, develop healthy behaviors, and perform well in their studies.

The aim of our research was to investigate body appreciation and its association with health related variables, psychological, anthropometric, and family-related factors, as well as media internalization. The health related variables were taking part in sports, eating healthy, the perception of one's own health, alcohol consumption, smoking, and dieting for thinnes. The psychological factors were self-esteem, satisfaction with life, body appreciation, proactive coping, and optimism. A separate group was created for media internalization. Family-related factors included information on the presence of obesity and eating disorders in the family. In addition, there were questions concerning parents' educational level, social class, parents' marital status, and the parenting style perceived by the student. Anthropometric data included weight, height, and perception of one's body shape. The sample consisted of 454 female high school students (14-20 age). 34.4% of participants were in year 9, 33% in year 10, 21.4% in year 11 and 11.4% in year 12. A paper-based, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. Our results highlighted the importance of body appreciation in the development and maintenance of a positive body image and its positive role in psychological well-being and health behaviour. The results of the relationship between parenting style and body appreciation revealed the role of contextual influences, family environment and family interactions in the development of adolescent girls' body image. The findings of media internalization confirm the importance of talking to adolescents about body image and the effects of media, both within the family and in wider settings such as in schools. Our results can contribute to the development of complex health education programmes to promote and maintain a positive body image. Health education programmes should focus on raising media awareness and developing resilience against messages conveyed by the media, e.g. the promotion of a slim body, and the presentation of unrealistic images. Moreover, as our results show, promoting self-esteem and self-acceptance should also be an essential element of health education, which can be crucial

for the prevention of all problem behaviours. Programmes should focus not only on negative body image and its risk factors and dangers, but also on the importance of positive body image and body appreciation. It would also be essential to emphasise the protective factors of positive body image, to strengthen existing resources and to develop additional protective factors.